



The El Paso Behavioral Health Consortium is a convening instrument to help foster, strengthen and properly recognize the integral partnerships that create change. It is not a group formed to take credit for great collaborations. Since 2015 El Paso County has grown in communication, coordination and collaboration leading to significant improvements in the behavioral health system of care. The following is a growing list of community accomplishments:

Improved crisis care continuum

- ✓ Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) were established through a collaboration with the City of El Paso and Emergence Health Network.
- ✓ Emergence Health Network now has staff trained in First-Episode Psychosis Treatment in its Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) Program.
- ✓ Emergence Health Network opened an extended observation center. This crisis unit is open 24-hours a day, 7 days a week to provide up to 48 hours of observation and stabilization for individuals in need. A psychiatrist is available if immediate medication or psychiatric intervention is needed. The extended observation unit is designed to divert individuals from emergency department utilization and jails to a place where they can receive proper mental health care.

Improved Justice System coordination of care

- ✓ The County of El Paso, the Sheriff's Office, Emergence Health Network, and University Medical Center El Paso have helped to transform coordination of care from point of entry to case management upon release to help individuals battling serious mental health and addiction conditions.
- ✓ The County of El Paso, Judge Francisco Dominguez, Adult Probation and Emergence Health Network are working to develop a mental health court for the county.

Improving workforce availability

- ✓ UTEP in collaboration with community partners increased the number of LPC Supervisor trainers to certify more LPCs and increase availability of mentors for candidates seeking professional experience hours.
- ✓ UTEP and Texas Tech HSC El Paso collaborated to develop and APA accredited psychologist internship program. The program is helping to increase the number of practicing clinical psychologists in the region.
- ✓ Texas Tech HSC psychiatry residency has doubled in size due to state grants from 4 psychiatrists per year to 8 per year (4-year program), they also expanded the psychiatry fellowship program from 1 fellow to 6 fellows (2-year program)
- ✓ UTEP expanded nursing graduate programs to include a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program



Increased collaborations for timely access to care for children, youth and families

- ✓ El Paso Child Guidance Center, and a growing list of community organizations and agencies are convening under the Trauma Informed Resilience Oriented Learning Community (TIROLC) to integrate trauma informed policies and practices for improved child and family services.
- ✓ El Paso Center for Children is leading the Strong Families collaborative work group funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children Youth and Families-Children's Bureau to build protective factors for families and prevent child maltreatment.
- ✓ Paso del Norte Children's Development Center is leading a Help Me Grow collaborative work group with support from the Texas Department of Health and Human Services. The group will work to improve connection, coordination and continuity of care for families with children ages 0-3 years of age.
- ✓ Texas Tech Health Sciences Center is implementing the Child Psychiatry Access Network and the Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT) programs to provide timely access to child psychiatry consults in primary care and school settings.
- ✓ Project Vida Health Center, Socorro Independent School District and a growing list of community partners are collaborating to provide a model coordination of care to help children in need connect with mental health services.

Increased availability of education and training

- ✓ The Junior League of El Paso and NAMI El Paso collaborated to bring the Ending the Silence program to area middle and high schools educating thousands of youth about mental health.
- ✓ NAMI El Paso now has more than 100 trained volunteer instructors and 14 different programs available for those interested in learning more.
- ✓ Emergence Health Network provides Mental Health First Aid courses and offers targeted training on topics such as suicide prevention, grief management, stress reduction and how to seek out appropriate services.
- ✓ The Texas A&M Colonias program offers the De Mujer a Mujer program to help empower women at risk for isolation and depression.
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Increased care integration and service provider availability

- ✓ A majority of mental health providers are shifting service options to telehealth or audio only. This change is a result of COVID 19 care reimbursement and loosened privacy restrictions. These types of interventions are shown to be effective methods of service delivery. El Paso County providers see this shift as transformational and working much better than anticipated. This is consistent with findings in a June 2020 Milbank Memorial Fund report on four systematic reviews and 36 individual studies indicate that E-Consults, compared with the traditional referral process, appear to be safe and are associated with: improved access to specialty care, more efficient use of health care resources, high patient and clinician satisfaction, and lower total cost of care.
- ✓ The Paso del Norte Health Information Exchange (PHIX) opened doors to improving options for secure, confidential, timely sharing of mental health information. PHIX is one of only three health information exchanges in the country with signed on partners such as; the U.S. Veteran's Administration, Department of Defense, Emergence Health Network (a Texas Local Mental Health Authority), The Hospitals of Providence (Tenet Corporation Hospitals), Texas Tech Health Sciences Center El Paso, Federally Qualified Health Centers, University Medical Center El Paso and others. The PHIX also received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to explore tools for preliminary assessments of risk factors for mental health conditions and improved continuity and integration of behavioral healthcare within the primary healthcare environment. PHIX is also exploring ways to connect and coordinate existing databases to reduce service fragmentation. For example, data within the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) coordinated with primary care and mental health provider data to help ensure effective case management.
- ✓ Project Vida Health Center established co-location centers through alliances with Family Services of El Paso, Recovery Alliance/Casa Vida and Aliviane where they embedded clinic services for access to primary care in behavioral health settings.
- ✓ Through an alliance with Texas Tech Health Sciences Center El Paso Department of Psychiatry, Project Vida Health Center helped maintain three child and adolescent psychiatrists practicing in the community
- ✓ Emergence Health Network was credentialed as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). This is a new provider type in Medicaid designed to provide a comprehensive range of mental health and substance use disorder services to vulnerable individuals. CCBHCs are responsible for directly providing (or contracting with partner organizations to provide) nine types of services with an emphasis on the provision of 24-hour crisis care, utilization of evidence-based practices, care coordination and integration with physical health care.
- ✓ Rio Vista Behavioral Health Hospital opened in 2019 to add 80 additional mental health inpatient care beds including capacity for up to 40 adolescent inpatient care patients. The hospital is also expanding its outpatient service options for El Paso County.

The Consortium is committed to ongoing collaboration where all partners are welcome, empowered, and unified to achieve an ideal behavioral health service and support system and to reduce the burden of mental illness by designing improved, efficient, and patient-centered care for El Paso County residents. **For more information about the work of the Consortium Leadership Councils and Executive Committee, [click here.](#)**